

Uncle Harry and Albert Brand

[but first, some comments on El Paso chapter]

Subject: Re: Labor Day Weekend Compilation: "Out in the West Texas Town of El Paso" by Annabeth Balance

Well, it seems I am getting tangled up with too many duplicates of emails floating around — sorry!

So here are some more comments, mostly in reference to your footnotes on the "West Texas" document (different from the comments I made in a similar email earlier today).

And yes, I am still going to send you a fresh version of the big document, with my minor changes already made in it. Larger things I either INDICATE on the doc, or TALK about in email.

OK, regarding the divorce. I think it was granted in a NM court, probably Grant County (where Silver City is). I am not sure that the divorce was final when we moved to El Paso — I'm guessing that is when Mary had the house ready for us to come. It seems to me that the divorce finalization happened some piece of time later. But it does seem to me that each time the money was late coming from Daddy, Mama went through some period of angst, having to weigh the matter of contacting the court, and having it be in NM (different state from where we were living).

So you could possibly just say "... El Paso Co., TX; they were divorced in early 1947". And, did you intend to have Mama's last name Brand written in all caps?

I see two different spellings on Mary S's last name — one with and one without a "c" in it. Don't know if that is anything you can get resolved.

About grave sites for Aunt Anna and Albert Brand. I am pretty sure that she is buried in El Paso somewhere — either buried or in a crypt (?) if cremated.

But for him, that is a whole 'nother story! I will write it up in a separate piece, but the bottom line here is that you will probably find him in the Philippines if anywhere. (Are you familiar with this item?)

I didn't know that the Salt of the Earth was up for a possible remake in 2003! Tell me more! Why? Who? Why not? etc.

Mama and Daddy both spoke fluent Spanish — that's how they would talk about things when they didn't want us kids to know what they were saying!

There's another little story here about Mama. She often qualified to work as a substitute teacher, which she could easily accommodate when she was working a job that did not require daily presence at a desk somewhere. She did this both in New Mexico and in El Paso. In both school systems, it was illegal for the Mexican-American students to speak Spanish anywhere on the school grounds, both to encourage their growth in using English, and to forestall problems potentially hatched if the students felt they would not be overheard or understood. (That's funny, the use of those two words together. But I digress again!) One time Mama told the story of a teaching day she was doing, when a group of guys who felt like they were pretty hot stuff were in the back of the room, talking in Spanish. She kept right on with what she was saying to the class, then turned to the guys and in Spanish she corrected their Spanish, told them to quit it, and to pay attention or she would send them to the Principal's office; and then continued with her lesson to the class. They were "struck dumb" by all of that and did indeed at least settle down and not disturb the class any more. (big grins!)

Regarding Mama working at KEPO, it was when she wanted to move to the much more lucrative position of sales rep for the station, leaving the little salaried position, that she had to agree to work for commission alone before they would allow her to make the switch. (They were quite surprised that she not only was able to do the job, she thoroughly excelled in it!) They finally did grant her the base pay that the male sales reps got, plus her commissions that she earned.

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One other item regarding Daddy's death. I *think* that it was one more day, not just the very next day after the accident that he died. I had to come from Jackson to get there, on no notice at all of course, so plane flights were bizarre, and I did get there just shortly before he actually died. It seems to me that he had been in the hospital over night by the time I got there, But I could be mistaken — that was a pretty rough time of course.

Oh my goodness! Wait! Are you certain that he was in El Paso in the hospital? Do you have some sort of documentation about it? Because all of a sudden, I think it was Silver City! I think that Eva drove him down that horrible bumpy road just to get to the local airstrip, and someone there flew him to Silver to avoid such a long bumpy ride in the back of the station wagon! (He had a huge gaping wound in his head.) And my trip was complicated by having to take two flights, getting to El Paso, and then trying to get to Silver City somehow. Because I have a sudden little memory of a lot of confusion about getting me from the airport to Silver City. I was so befuddled that I didn't even think of renting a car. Maybe

Billy or someone did come pick me up. I really do not remember what was the actual case. Anyway, I arrived there much later than anyone else.

But I know that Eva set his funeral at the Episcopal church, and all of us were seated in the balcony up behind the rest of the congregation (!!!!) so I couldn't see hardly anything of it. Somehow I remember heavy curtains in the area. Later I asked her why she had set it there, and she said she thought that would make me/us feel more at ease or something. I do know that I was quite moved by the HUGE turnout for the funeral, and how truly he seemed to be loved (or at least liked) and appreciated by so many different people. The cemetery where he was buried is some distance out from Silver City, and the enormous line of cars in the procession snaked around those hilly roads for (it seemed) miles in length.

And I see you next email with the request for "The Road to Tougaloo" story. Oh, have no fear, that has been in my mind all this time, and I will indeed write it up! And thanks for asking!

So now, I *will* go back to the "West Texas" document — after I have a bit of dinner!

Love ya — me

[from AB, 4 Sep 2017]

Hey Mikey —

OK, this [Chapter on El Paso] is probably as "clean" as I can get it, but of course if you see something I missed, by all means correct it!

And yes, I do have yet one more item involving your footnotes. This one re: Aunt Anna — she wrote two pretty major novels, "Thunder Before Seven" and "I Want You Myself" — I think the first one is the one she was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for (but she didn't win it!) She also wrote many short stories and novellas, published in women's magazines and the like.

And "Uncle Harry" (H.B. Willis), her second husband, was the only grandfather that we kids knew. He was a DEAR gentle person, very refined in his behavior patterns, from upstate New York. He married Aunt Anna after

the apparent death (long-term disappearance) of Mama's father Albert Brand, just when I imagine Aunt Anna was at the height of her social-writer's status in El Paso. They must have been quite the toast of the town.

And Aunt Anna was his third wife! The first one was Jane Knickerbocker, yes of that family in new York, and many of the finer items of artwork and household furnishings came to us as a result of that marriage. That ended in divorce, and he married a sweet woman artist named She died and I think he left New York after that to just get into a different milie. He worked with the border patrol and US Customs Agency in El Paso until his retirement.

Here are the few things that I know about Mama's father Albert Brand.

The family lived in the "Big Bend" area of Texas before moving to El Paso, somewhere around 1918 - 21. Anyway, I found that family, with two little girls named Helen and Nina listed in the 1920 Census, both in Big Bend and in El Paso. And this is consistent with Aunt Anna writing that book set in "pioneer Texas" days, that the Texas Cabin model was a visual prop to aid in her writing. (TERRIBLE sentence! grin)

Mama would speak longingly of cherished mornings when she would play tennis on the vacant lot beside the house in El Paso with her dad. She said he would travel a LOT, back & forth to China, with his sister, as a missionary. Every phrase of that sentence is suspect to me. There are in fact a fairly large number of very nice clearly Chinese items in our family heritage, evidently results of those trips. Then (I can't guess the date here) he just did not return from one of those trips. Numerous attempts to contact him were unsuccessful, so after 7 years, Aunt Anna had papers drawn up to declare him dead. I'm guessing she felt she had to do that in order to marry Harry.

And one day Mama came home from college classes at Texas Western, to find her father standing in the living room arguing loudly with her mother! Figuring backwards, I would guess this must have been about 1929 -31, possibly earlier. Anyway, Aunt Anna *ordered* Mama to go to her room, which she did, and she never saw her father again.

She did however see some letters from him to Aunt Anna, possibly after Aunt Anna died, and those letters had a return address in the Philippines. He had evidently simply stopped and created a new life , with a wife and children

there, I have no idea about names or anything else.

Well, now I really DO think I am through with this portion! I do have another story (or maybe more) that will fit into this time period, so they will be coming along in the next few days.

Then I will begin on the Tougaloo chapter, but that will be long, and probably much less chopped up than this portion has been.

'Nite now! (2:45 am)